

Plate XIII



Photo. H. T. Reeves.

The Orange Blossom Orchid, *Sarcochilus falcatus*

THE JUNGLE COUNTRY OF EAST VICTORIA

By H. T. REEVES and W. H. NICHOLLS

Our East Gippsland trip began on October 11, when we travelled from Melbourne to Cann River (Noorinbee), where we were met by Mr. Chas. Cameron, who motored us to his residence at Noorinbee North, 260 miles easterly from Melbourne. Outside Orbost the Gippsland Waratah (*Telopea oreocdes*) was in bloom, and near Sale we admired a good show of *Diuris punctata*. We were keen on exploring the dense jungles around the Drummer, etc., the habitat of several epiphytal orchids—peculiar, more or less, to the district.

Next morning we requisitioned horses and crossed the Cann River to the northern hills. The banks of this wide stream, with a sandy bed, are well-clothed with vegetation, chiefly Eucalypts, Blackwoods and other Acacias. At the mouths of the many tributary creeks huge vines hang from the tree-tops, giving a jungle-like appearance. At the fords clumps of *Cyperus lucidus* and *Carex polyantha* grew in abundance, with willows on the islands, of which there are several. *Smilax australis* was luxuriant at the mouths; also here and there on the flats; from many tall trees its thorny ropes and large coarse foliage cascaded to right over and into the water. It was in flower, also in fruit. The massed blooms of *Clematis aristata* and *Tecoma australis*—the latter varying considerably in the depth of colour markings—festooned the tangled shrubbery wherever suitable conditions obtained. On the hillslopes *Eucalyptus sieberiana* (Silvertop), *E. scabra* and *E. Maidemii* were the most noticeable gums, the first mentioned predominating. The moist gullies and other favoured places were luxuriant with the golden sprays of *Goodia lotifolia* and other less abundant, but equally attractive, flowering shrubs. And in places more open, the coral-red flowers of *Koenedyia rubicunda* ran riot with the cream bottle-brush blooms of *McLalena ericifolia* and *M. squarrosa*, hanging in graceful festoons even to the ground. In such surroundings we saw several large Goannas (monitor lizards), which were preying upon young rabbits; also some Wallabies. Chocolate-brown frogs were congregated on many half-submerged logs in the swamps, and making an almost deafening noise. Large Black Snakes were a nuisance as we pushed our way through the heavy scrub, northwards.

Gang Gang Cockatoos were noisy in the tree-tops, and the "tink tink" of Bell Miners echoed through the valleys. In sight of Mt. Kaye (3,284 ft.), the only conspicuous peak of the range, we ventured along a well-hidden ravine where Lilly Pilly trees (*Eugenia Smithii*) rivalled even the great gums in height. At the foot of a waterfall made still more attractive by flowering bushes of *Prostanthera rotundifolia*, we found our first epiphyte. *Sarcophilus*

parviflorus grew abundantly on the moss-covered limbs of a *Pittosporum* tree. Tree-ferns were very fine in this ravine, and the orange-berry clusters of both *Morinda jasminoides* and *Eustrephus latifolius* (Wombat Berry) intermingled with the ebony ones of *Vitis hypoglauca*.

Recrossing the river at a convenient ford we found ourselves in the haunts of the Water Dragon (*Physignathus lesueurii*). It was interesting to watch the reptiles diving into the stream and gaining the security of their burrows; in one small area of the cliff-face we counted more than eighty holes, all apparently tenanted. At another locality a tame-wild Water Dragon was observed; it even allowed us to handle it. The fact that this is a favourite fishing-place probably accounted for its tameness.

In the depths of the jungles the Giant Maidenhair (*Adiantum formosum*) grew.

Many interesting plants were added to the vasculum on the return. Among these were *Lissanthe strigosa*; *Persoonia linearis*—a graceful shrub; *Howittia trilocularis*; *Hibbertia stricta*—common on the hills; *Pterostylis pusilla*—the most easterly record for this ground orchid. Many other terrestrial orchids were seen, all common species. *Diuris longifolia* and *Glossodia major* were plentifully distributed. On the Drummer, *Caladenia præcox* was found, including a colour form—bronzy-pink—originally collected by Mr. Chas. French, at Bayswater. *Glossodia minor* was searched for in many places and eventually found outside Cann River township, also at Marlo. Mr. W. Hunter, surveyor of Orbst District, reports this orchid, previously a doubtful record for Victoria, to be plentiful near Genoa during early spring. Splendid specimens of the Sickie Greenhood (*Pt. falcata*) were found in the extensive *Melaleuca* swamps near Cann River and Noorinbee North.

On October 14, Mrs. Cameron drove us to Mr. Pedersen's property at Noorinbee. A few miles away, in the jungles, *Sarcochilus falcatus* was observed *in situ*; its chief host appeared to be the Tree-Violet (*Hymenanthera dentata*). This showy orchid grows in a certain amount of sunshine on the margins of the scrub. Unfortunately, it is doomed to extinction in this, its only Victorian habitat, unless steps be taken to preserve it. Ferneries in Orbst tell their own tale.

The Creeping Polypody (*Cyclophorus serpens*) was exceedingly plentiful on the trees, here as elsewhere in the jungles. In many cases the great matted colonies of this fern were gay with orange and yellow fronds. The boles of many moss-covered trees and tree-ferns were covered in *Polypodium pustulatum* and *Blechnum Patersonii*. On the hills close by large white-flowered specimens of *Cal. carneæ* were collected, and the leaves of *Calcana major* were seen.

Plate XIV



Photo. H. T. Reeves.

The Streaked Rock Orchid, *Dendrobium striolatum*, draping granite boulder